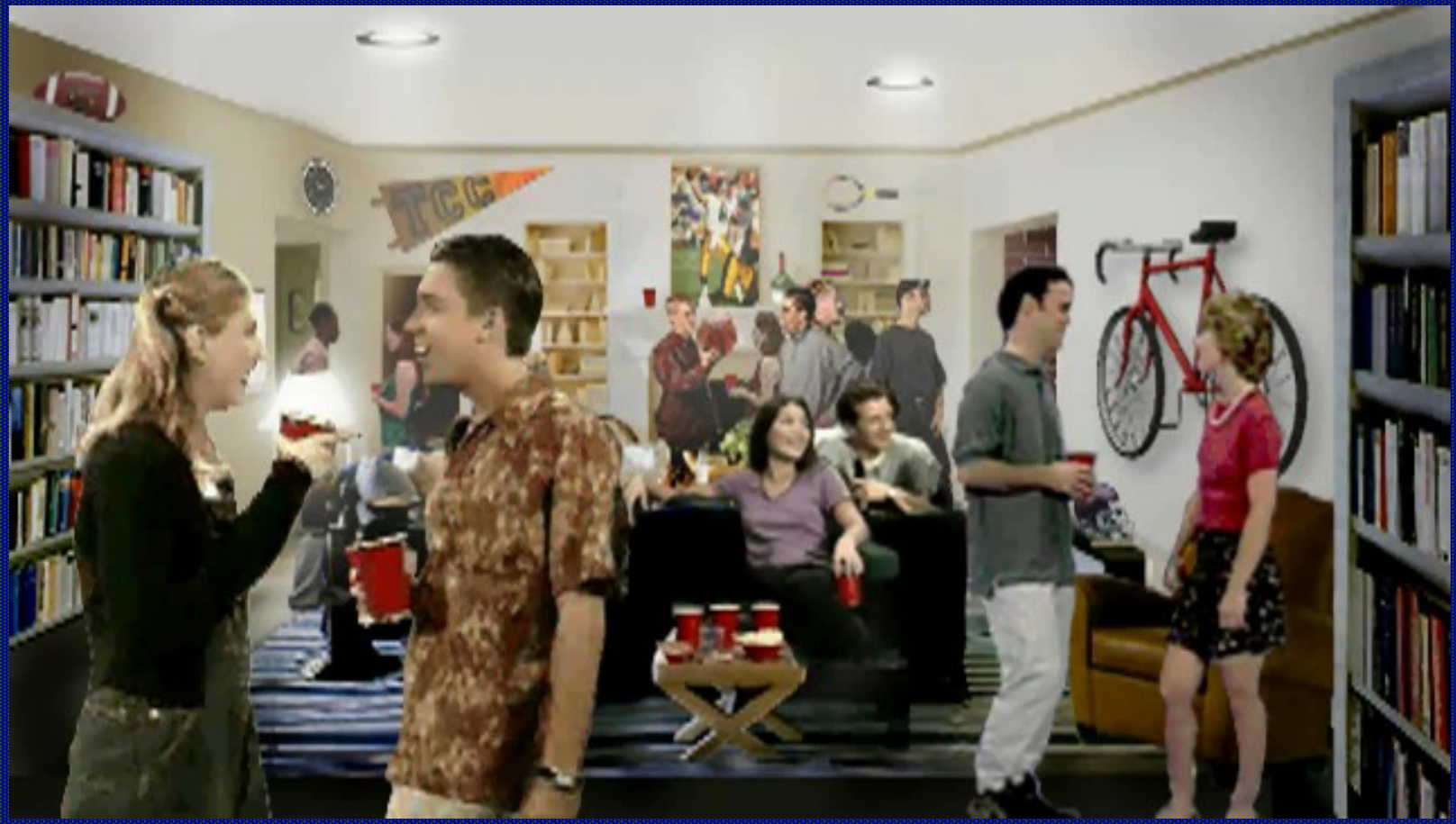
Progression of Addiction

1. How it Happens
2. Addiction At Its Roots
3. The Cycle Begins
4. Addiction and Tolerance
5. Progression of Addiction
6. Personality Changes
7. Addicts cannot stop using for two reasons
8. Bio-Chemical Aspects of Addiction and Drug Craving
9. Getting Help

No one wants to be a drug addict or alcoholic, but this doesn't stop people from getting addicted. The most commonly asked question is - how? How could this happen to my son, my daughter, my spouse? And why won't they stop?

The first thing to understand about addiction is that mind-altering drugs are basically painkillers. For drugs to be attractive to a person, there must first be some underlying unhappiness, sense of hopelessness, or physical pain.

The cycle of addiction begins when a person has some problem, sense of unease or physical discomfort. The use of mood altering substance provides temporary relief from worry or boredom – or provides an avenue for connecting with others.

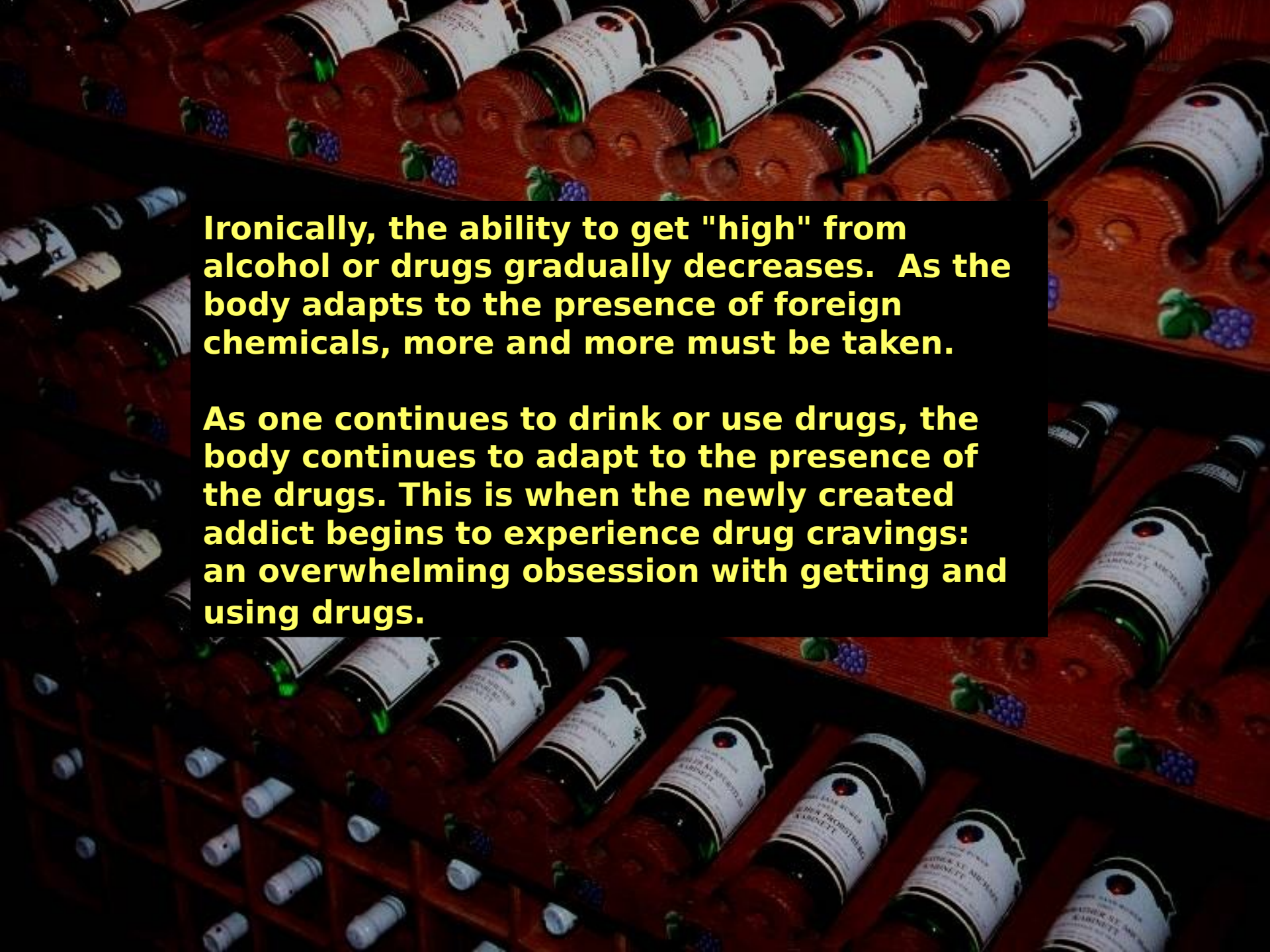


As the person drinks or tries drugs, the alcohol or drugs APPEAR to solve their problem. They feel better, more relaxed, talkative, more social – more popular. Because they now SEEM better able to deal with life, the drugs become valuable to them.

The person gradually increases use of their drug of choice. They may use one or two drugs, perhaps related to their ability to pay.

Changes in behavior can be seen by others. Increased absences from work, trouble getting up in the mornings, blaming others for their actions and wanting family members or friends to make excuses for them.

They lose the ability to control their use and disregard the consequences of their actions. They are trapped. Whatever problem they were initially trying to solve has now faded from memory.



Ironically, the ability to get "high" from alcohol or drugs gradually decreases. As the body adapts to the presence of foreign chemicals, more and more must be taken.

As one continues to drink or use drugs, the body continues to adapt to the presence of the drugs. This is when the newly created addict begins to experience drug cravings: an overwhelming obsession with getting and using drugs.

As addiction progresses, the person will become increasingly haggard and ill-tempered. They will be riding on a drug or alcohol induced emotional roller-coaster which may actually be mistaken for mental illness.

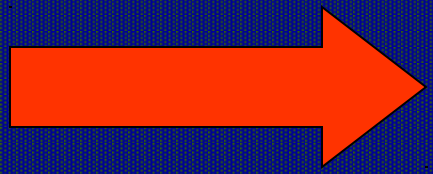
They may seem very "up" and enthusiastic when high, but become depressed and lethargic when the drugs wear off. At this point, the addict is stuck in a vicious downward spiral.

Whether they want to stop or not, they are trapped. By now, the drugs have changed them both physically and mentally.

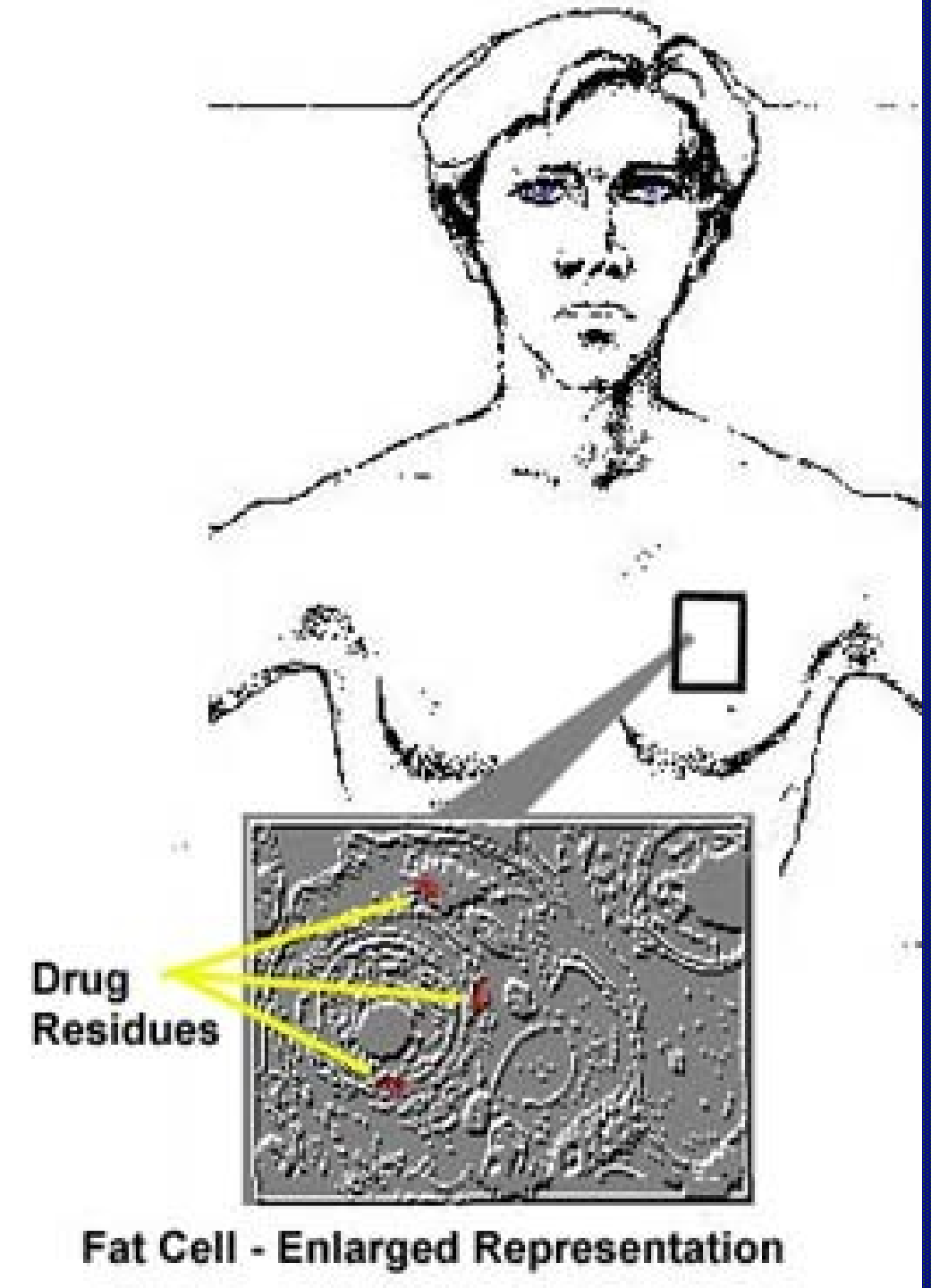
Addicts cannot stop using drugs for **two** reasons.

These are:

Cravings caused by drug residues which remain in the body.

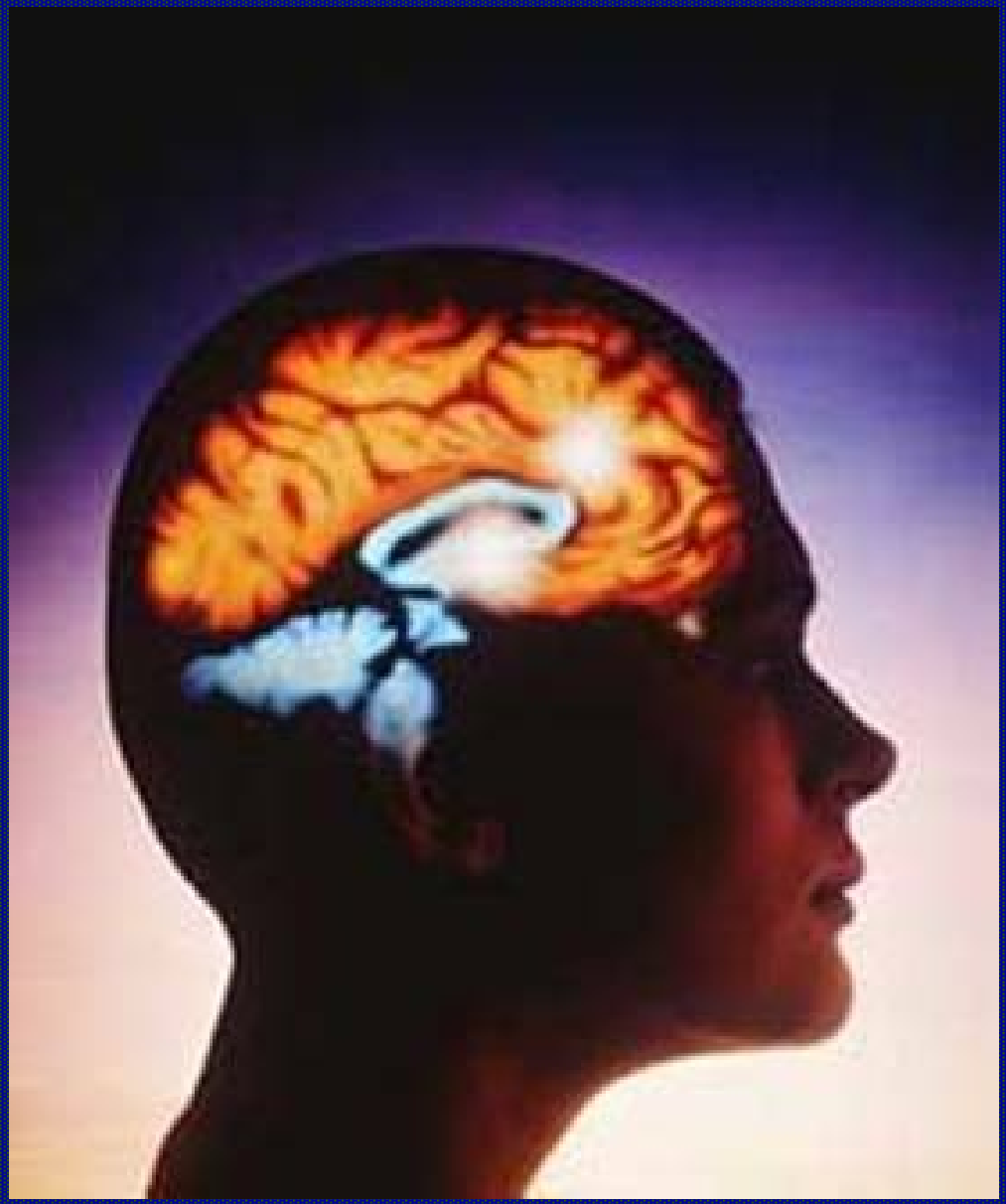


The Biochemical Personality caused by drugs and the lifestyle of the addict.



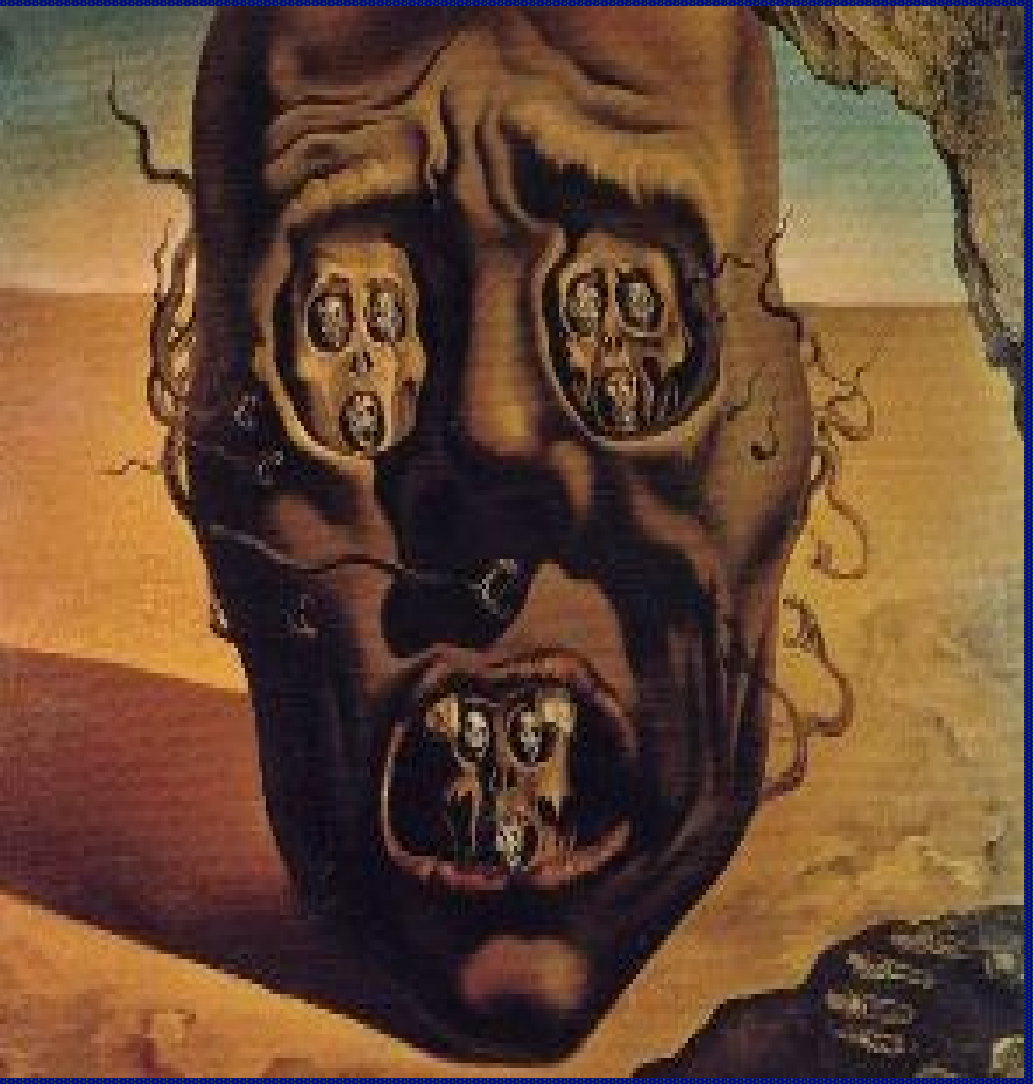
When a person continuously drinks or uses drugs, their body becomes supersaturated with metabolites (chemicals the body converts drugs into). These metabolites may become trapped fatty tissues and remain.

The body releases these metabolites back into the bloodstream and trigger cravings which are difficult to resist.



When a person attempts to stop taking a drug, receptor sites in the brain that have adapted to large amounts of the drug metabolite are now forced to deal without.

The brain “requests” the addict to give it more of the drug. One way to end this “craving” is to take more drugs and the cycle begins all over again.



Long-term addiction can cause one's personality to change. This is called the Biochemical Personality. Some of the characteristics are:

Mood swings
Unreliable. Unable to finish projects.
Unexpressed resentment and secret hatreds.
Dishonesty. Lies to family, friends, employers.
Withdraws from those who love him. Isolates self.
May appear chronically depressed.
May begin stealing from family and friends.

Take the First Step toward a Better Life!

Do I, or someone I know, Need Help?

If you are asking this question, there is probably a drinking or drug problem OR trouble related to drinking or drugs. If so, then the problem simply won't go away without assistance.

Where Do I go to Get Help?

Every community has an Army Substance Abuse Program that offers free and confidential services to Soldiers, DoD employees, family members and retirees. To find the program nearest you, call DSN 370-1710 or go to the ASAP Web site at

http://www.26thasg.heidelberg.army.mil/ASAP/contact.htm

Don’t Wait!

Start Living Life Today!

LET'S REVIEW!

Drug and Alcohol use can progress from casual use r False

True – It can get worse!

When yo alcohol t called To

True – the body adapts and needs more of the drug

An irresistible urge to use drugs or alcohol is calle

True – But you can learn to resist cravings

The cycle of addition usually begins as a response t

True – Use your good coping skills instead of drugs or alcohol

LET'S REVIEW!

Family or friends may make excuses for someone e
True or Fal

True – Don't cover up - confront!

Proble
drinki

True – But they only "seem" to go away

A perso
alcoho

True – A new lifestyle is needed

Every com
Abuse Pro
True or Fa

True – call today for more info

brought to you by the

Army Substance Abuse Program
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Employee Assistance/Prevention Coordinators

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